

National Unanimity recommended and enforced;

I N A

S E R M O N

PREACHED JUNE 22, 1780,

A T

ST. DIONYS BACK-CHURCH,

BEFORE THE

COMPANY OF ARMOURERS.

By THOMAS ^WEALES, D. D.

VICAR OF ST. SEPULCHRES.

L O N D O N :

Printed for T. CADELL, in the Strand.

M.DCC.LXXX.

[Price ONE SHILLING.]

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PREACHED JUNE 23, 1888

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VICAR OF ST. SEBASTIAN

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Printed for T. Cadell, in the Strand

M.D.C.C.XXXI

[Price One Shilling]

TO
THE MASTER, WARDENS,

AND

THE REST OF THE MEMBERS,

OF

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY

OF

ARMOURERS AND BRAZIERERS,

THIS DISCOURSE

(PREACHED AND PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST)

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT,

BY

THEIR MOST OBEDIENT,

HUMBLE SERVANT,

THOMAS WEALES.

TO
THE MASTER, WARDEN,

AND

THE REST OF THE MEMBERS

OF

THE WORKSHIPFUL COMPANY

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GENESIS, Chap. XLV. Ver. 24.

And he said unto his brethren, See that ye fall not out by the way.

SUCH was the affectionate charge of Joseph to his Brethren, just before they departed to their father's house. Having treated them with all the endearing marks of brotherly love during their stay with him in Egypt, and furnished them with *waggon*s full of provisions, changes of raiment, beside many hundred pieces of silver for their journey, this excellent person took his leave with this sage caution in my text, *See that ye fall not out by the way.* What a beautiful picture of filial piety, as well as brotherly affection, is exhibited to our view in the words that follow ! *Haste you, and go up to my father, and say unto him, thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt ; come down unto me, tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy childrens children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast. And there will I nourish thee (for yet there are five years of famine) ; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.----*

Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and ye shall have, and bring down my father hither. Ver. 9, 10, 11, 13. Every syllable that dropt from his lips bespeaks the great and good man. In all which befel him, the unseen hand of an all-gracious Providence is felt and acknowledged. How amiably impatient does he appear to glad his old father's breast with the news of his being not only alive, but also surrounded with all the choicest blessings of Heaven! The feeble remains of aged life were not able to support, or bear up, under such a weight of joy! They no sooner said, *Joseph is yet alive, and governor over all the land of Egypt*, than *Jacob's heart fainted; for he believed them not.* Ver. 26.

It may be here asked, what special reason there was for Joseph's farewell admonition of *See that ye fall not out by the way?* Might he not possibly at that precise juncture harbour an anxious fear, lest the return of so much good on his part, for so much evil on theirs, should overwhelm them with confusion? Might it not beget a few cutting self-reproaches, attended with bitter upbraidings of one another? They might soon break forth, with some warmth and emphasis, "Is this the brother whom we so despightfully treated, nay, " whose life we so unfeelingly conspired against? Is this " the brother whom we cast into the pit, and agreed to say, " *some evil beast hath devoured him?* Is this the brother " whom we sold to a company of Ishmaelites for twenty " pieces of silver? Was ever one, who deserved half so " well

“well of us, treated half so ill? Was ever so much evil overcome by so much good?”

And may not the wholesome admonition of Joseph to his brethren be worth laying up in our own hearts? Might it not, with singular profit, be drawn forth upon many a trying occasion, many a critical exigency? As fellow-travellers upon the same road of life, is there not sufficient room to put you upon your guard now and then, lest ye *should fall out by the way*? Are we not full apt to divide and fall asunder? Have not we much ado to live peaceably with all men? And are not such divisions plain and direct violations of that new commandment which our Lord bequeathed to us, **LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**

That we may be led to copy after so admirable a model in my text, I shall,

I. Shew that a mutual love is the distinguishing mark of a disciple of Christ: And,

II. That it hath a manifest tendency to make us happy, both in this life and the next.

I. The religion of Christ is in itself the most lovely, the most humane, the most peaceable, that can be imagined. All its precepts are the most friendly to mankind, being evidently calculated to promote the happiness of individuals, and of

civil society. All the virtues that can render a people flourishing and secure, are enjoined by it; all the vices subversive of public order and peace, are strictly forbid. The *end of the commandment is charity*, or a principle of good-will and benevolence towards men of all ranks, of all persuasions, of all nations. Our blessed Master is particularly careful to guard against all possible mistakes upon this *great article*, whether we do really belong to him or not. *By this*, says he at his last supper, *shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*. John xiii. 35. Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than this grand criterion be antiquated or repealed. All other proofs, by which numbers are willing to deceive themselves into a notion of being his disciples, are imaginary, false, and equivocal. And that we may not err in regard to the kind or degree of *love* which we *owe one to another*, he at the same time added, *As I have loved you, do ye also love one another*. His love for us was the most pure, the most unfeigned, the most disinterested, the most firm and durable. There was a daily beauty in his life, which may be considered as the finest comment upon the religion that he taught. If you would see all its lessons transcribed or reduced to practice, you need only mark how *Jesus* lived. Never was man so backward to think evil of another; never was man so willing to believe as well as possible of him; never was man so difficult to be *provoked*; never was man so ready to forgive the grossest provocations upon earth. All the evil which enraged malice could do unto him, he had but one way of making a return to, which was by overcoming that *evil* with

with good. With what invincible patience, what undisturbed serenity and calmness, did he bear the most malevolent treatment, the most ungrounded aspersions, the most provoking contradictions in nature!

When the Pharisees called him by the vilest of names; when they said to him, *thou hast a devil*, he only replied, with all the composure imaginable, *I have not a devil, but I honour my father; and ye do dishonour me.* John viii. 49. At another time, when the Jews carried their excess of outrage so far as to take up stones to cast at him, we read of no unbecoming warmth and passion, no hasty words, no opprobrious language, on his part: He only said, *Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?* John x. 32.

When one of the officers who stood by (full eager to shew his zeal against Jesus, that was summoned before the council) actually struck him with the palm of his hand, he meekly said no more nor less than this, *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, or, accuse me before the council; but if well, why smitest thou me, why do you, direct contrary to all justice and equity, strike me uncondemned, and that in the presence of the court?* When perfectly void of all feeling they were savage enough to insult him upon the cross itself, in the midst of all their barbarous and cruel mockeries, he was dumb, and opened not his mouth; except when he opened it in that fervent and pathetic address to his Father, in behalf
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of his very murderers, saying, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*—Greater love hath no man than this, to lay down his life for his friend; it remained only for a God to lay down his life for his enemies.

And where shall we look for a man beside more perfect in these special gospel precepts of *doing good for evil*, or *loving those that despitefully use us and persecute us*, than Joseph was? What a reproach is it for one who nameth the name of Christ, to appear almost an utter stranger to them! If, instead of thinking no evil, you are disposed to think as hardly of another as you possibly can; if, instead of drawing a kind veil over his real defects, you are for magnifying or adding to them; if, instead of making the most of his real virtues, you are for diminishing or calling them in question; if, instead of rendering *good for evil*, *blessing for cursing*, you proceed in a virulent unrelenting manner to seek *revenge*, you are far enough from being what you profess, and, perhaps, would fain be thought, a *Christian*. “Give me,” says an ancient apologist * for the Christian religion, “a man who is passionate and malicious, and I will render him, with a few gospel precepts, as meek as a lamb.”

III. Such a mutual love and forbearance as is prescribed by the gospel, hath a direct tendency to make us happy, both in this life and the next.

* Lactantius.

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Were we not called upon by that religion which is our own, to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and malice, we should do it of our own accord, if we did but consult the peace of our breasts. Each individual is at present more happy, in the same proportion as he is more kind, more charitable, more forgiving. Never did a man pass by an injury, or pray for another who had used him ill, but he had a truer enjoyment of himself. To love, or do a kindness to your enemy, is, in effect, to love, and do a still greater kindness to yourself. What home-felt joy did Joseph experience in providing for those very brethren, who hated him to that degree, as to conspire against his life! How altogether different must the feelings of his brethren have been in the article of weeping upon his neck, and kissing him, from what they were at the time of throwing him into the pit, or selling him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver!

What another thing would this world be, if the vital principle of Christian charity was once kindled in the hearts of those who inhabit it! So far should we be from thinking as ill as possible of each other, that we should be ever casting about for the most favourable construction which the most exceptionable conduct would at any rate admit of. So far should we be from envying those above us, that we should look with infinite complacency upon, and rejoice in their prosperity. So far from being puffed up with, or behaving unseemly on account of a little superiority of rank or fortune,

we should, by our condescension and good-nature, endeavour to render that superiority as easy and acceptable as possible to all beneath us. So far from seeking our own good alone, or centering all our views within the narrow sphere of ourselves, we should be seeking, with all our might, the welfare of as many as came within our reach. We have a lively description of the blessed state of a society or people that are *united*, drawn by the masterly pen of the Psalmist: *Behold how good and joyful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment* (or that composition, made, by God's own direction, of the principal aromatic spices and oil olive, *Exod. xxx. 23.*) *upon the head, that ran down unto the beard, even unto Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his clothing.* A similitude this, which admirably expresses the diffusive nature of the joy resulting from such an unity, as it is not confined to the principal members, but spreads through all the inferior ones belonging to the society. *It is as the dew of Hermon, which fell upon the hill of Zion; for there the Lord promised his blessing, and life for evermore.* Another comparison this, which is beautifully significant of the *profit* arising to any society or body so *united*, the dew of Hermon, which fell on the pastures of Bashan, rendering them so fertile and celebrated for fattening cattle. It is a degree towards the life of angels, for brethren to live under the same roof in a mutual intercourse of tender and endearing offices, lovely in themselves, and loving one another.

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How just the reverse was the situation of *David*, when he was shut up, or connected in civil society, with persons of a quite opposite stamp, being altogether *hateful in themselves, and hating one another!* Hear him pouring forth his plaintive lamentation after this sort, *Who is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and have my habitation among the tents of Kedar, i. e. the savage Arabians. My soul hath long dwelt among them that are enemies to peace. I labour for peace, but when I speak to them thereof, they make them ready for battle.* Psalm cxx. 4. To be doomed to live in the same society with men of such a malevolent turn and spirit, is no other than the very essence of misery.

The same principle of mutual love and good-will which is requisite to make us happy upon earth, can alone qualify us to become partakers of a blessed inheritance *among the saints in light.* That *charity which never faileth*, is the main groundwork and foundation of our bliss in a world to come. Heaven is the element of perfect concord, where all who are permitted to enter, *dearly love*, and are *dearly beloved* by each other. That region of endless felicity would be no heaven at all to as many as go out of the world with hearts full of envy, rancour, and hatred. Those purely diabolical passions, will only render their owners meet for the company of those to whom they are in Scripture peculiarly ascribed, viz. the *devil and his angels.* Happiness is a relative thing, and implies in its very nature, a correspondence between the objects that

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present us with it, and the faculties which taste and enjoy them. To join the innumerable company of angels, the glorious fellowship of the prophets and apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the host of triumphant souls, who composing one sacred choir, pour forth their rapturous hallelujahs to *Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever*; to be numbered among them, I say, can only be a pleasure to those who are qualified for such society, and can relish such employments. The highly exalted aim and tenor of the gospel precepts, is plainly to train us up for happiness in a life to come. How comparatively poor and circumscribed in their view are the best precepts or rules of the philosophers, which were chiefly calculated for the good of human society, and the happiness of individuals in this world!

It is confessedly a wild thing to look, that we should pass through a world of this sort without any divisions at all. As long as passions and weaknesses, arising from the common fund of human nature, prevail in the world, strife, in some shape or other, will be their certain attendant. The best of men, alas! have, at certain seasons, been prone to fall out by the way. Paul and Barnabas had once a sharp contention only about taking Mark along with them, which ended in a lasting separation. All that we can do is, *as far as possible, to live peaceably with all men*. By softening the envious, mitigating the violent, rectifying the mistaken, doing justice to the deserving, let us at least fall out as little as we can help.

If we have not charity enough to *believe* all things to another's advantage, let us still not be so perfectly void of it, as to believe all things to his disadvantage. If we have not charity enough to *bear* all things, still let us not contend warmly about trifles, or let our unavoidable contentions degenerate into lasting enmities. Although ye may not love another so well as to be able to discover nothing amiss in him, yet after an unwilling discovery or two of this kind, at least love him so well as to palliate, or draw a veil over his defects. How expressive of the true genius of that religion which Christ taught us, was his reply to Peter, when he put this question to him, *Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*—Jesus said unto him, *I say not unto thee, till seven times, but until seventy times seven.* It is at once the duty, the glory, the happiness, of a disciple of Christ, to forbear, and to forgive. And the man who will, in direct contradiction to the example and precepts of his divine Master, harbour a malicious or revengeful thought in his bosom, is only his own tormentor.

That ye may be at *peace* one with another, carefully guard against certain unruly passions, which ever were, and ever will be the infallible destroyers of it. What was it but pure envy that made Joseph's brethren not only to forget the endearing relation which they stood in towards him, but to divest themselves of even common humanity. *When they saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream* (prophetic of his future greatness), *and he told it his*
C 2 brethren,

brethren, and they hated him yet the more. Gen. xxxvii. 4, 5. The malice of a stranger or indifferent person, is simple; but that of a brother is mixed with, and heightened by, envy. How often do alliances of blood still beget mutual jealousies, and the keenest animosities! Are they not sometimes little better than designs on the fortune, hopes from the sickness, and joy from the deaths of each other?—Another passion which is a great divider, and calls for a tight rein, is *wrath*, or a hasty spirit. There are an outrageous sort of mortals, whose light unballasted heads are very apt to be overfret by every light gust or breeze of passion. *The beginning of strife*, says Solomon, *is as the letting out of water*, which shall by insensible degrees spread much farther than was at first thought of or expected. Agreeably to which proverb, he gives, in another place, this salutary advice or caution, *leave off contention before it be meddled with*, or rather mixed; that is, before matters are so confounded, that it is hard to distinguish who is in the right, and who is in the wrong. A grain or two of that *heavenly wisdom*, which is easy to be entreated, will not a little conduce to peace and harmony. He may boast the greatest victory, who is lord of himself, and master of his passions. It is devoutly to be wished, that a few were no less attentive to the regulation of their own hearts, than to the management of the state. We shall often judge amiss, by seeing things at too great a distance, or through the false medium of prejudice. How ready are we to balance our judgment of men and measures, by our personal inclinations and regards.—Another passion, which is a fruitful source of disorder

disorder and strife, both public and private, is an irregular or excessive love of money. The more a man leaves himself behind him, the better relation, the better citizen, the better patriot he will be. Private interest, and private views, have often a silent influence upon men, even when their movements are not distinctly felt within. St. Paul was, at a certain time, in no small danger of his life, for speaking against the silver shrines which Demetrius made for Diana. *This Paul*, says the maker, *hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands, so that this our craft is in danger to be set at nought.* The whole company of artificers, distracted between superstition and interest, were full of wrath, and cried out, *Great is the Diana of the Ephesians!* And do not the like passions of avarice, wrath, and envy, now produce the like effects? Do not they make men talk and act as if they were utterly bereft of reason, of principle, of religion. One who hath said unto gold, *thou art my God*, will not hesitate a minute about sacrificing at its shrine both soul and body, his present as well as his future happiness. How deformed, how altogether hideous, how directly the reverse of Charity, is the spectre of Envy, which is hourly gathering pain and misery from the success or fancied happiness of others.

To make a brief application to the present posture of affairs.

What blessed fruits might we at this precise juncture reap from a firm and well-concerted union! A UNION in judgment
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and opinion; a UNION of hearts and affections; a UNION of endeavours to establish the common welfare. Fatal and destructive, as divisions often prove in our natural and domestic relations, by many degrees still more fatal and destructive do they prove in our civil and public relations. What spoil and ravages, what a scene of bloodshed and cruelty might have probably followed upon a continuance of the late unexampled riots! Can we possibly look back, or think even what might have been the present state of this metropolis, without emotions of horror! How nigh did it approach to the dreadful catastrophe of the beloved city itself! The Prophet Jeremiah hath painted her desolation in such strong and lively colours, that you may almost fancy yourselves spectators of it. *Behold, says the God of Israel, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever beareth his ears shall tingle. Behold, the days come, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing: every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss, because of all the plagues thereof. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them. Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee,*
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And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Even so will I break this people, and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again, and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet. Jer. xix. 3. 6—12.

And now, have ye any regard for your religion, that pure unadulterated religion of Christ, which ye to this hour enjoy? Have ye any regard for the yet Established Church of England? Have ye any regard for the God of your fathers, whom ye are still permitted to worship, as he ought to be worshipped? Have ye any sort of value for your civil or religious liberties, or such a value which every one cannot but have, who hath but a proper sense of them? Nay, have ye at heart your substance, your wives, your children, your own lives? If ye have, *fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord.* It is surely high time to be unanimous, when the only question remaining is, whether we shall be any more a PEOPLE or not. For the divisions of Reuben, there were great thoughts of heart, after the conquest of the Canaanites. That mother in Israel, the wise and religious *Deborah*, did not know how to enjoy herself, until her victories abroad were crowned with union at home. True Christian charity diffusing itself through our public conduct, can alone restore harmony to a divided, or vigour to a weakened government. Never had we more occasion to PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD, that we may be able to defeat the traitorous

traitorous measures, to render abortive the bold deep-laid plans both of our intestine and foreign enemies. Never had we more room to take God for our refuge, our castle, our tower of defence, and mighty deliverer, even that God, whose sole privilege it is to still the raging of the sea, and the MADNESS OF THE PEOPLE. Never was it more necessary to keep a jealous eye over our crafty and insidious NEIGHBOUR, who is industriously seeking an occasion of sowing discord among us, and of surprizing us unawares, when thus successfully divided. Are ye not ready, of your own accord, to join the Psalmist in that truly patriotic wish, *O pray for the peace of Jerusalem! They shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces! For my brethren and companions sake I will wish thee prosperity; yea, because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good.* A national unanimity may still restore our nation to its ancient vigour and grandeur. A national unanimity may still render us the joy and envy of the whole earth. A rich harvest of glory may yet remain behind. Arts and commerce may flourish among us, as of old, and every one may sit down in quiet under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree. Our hearts may anew overflow with rapture to behold our garners full, affording all manner of store; our sheep bringing forth thousands and ten thousands; and our oxen strong to labour; to hear of no more breaking in, nor going out; no more complaining in our streets. —That such may be the happy case of this nation and people, God of his, &c.

F I N I S H.

